

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters intended for publication should be a maximum of 400 words and 10 references and should be sent to Simon Chapman, deputy editor, at the address given on the inside front cover. Those responding to articles or correspondence published in the journal should be received within six weeks of publication.

Tobacco-free United Nations

To the Editor – United Nations (UN) buildings can be ash-speckled smokey places, especially in lounge areas. This may all change in the next two years after the recent meeting of the World Health Assembly in the UN Palais des Nations in Geneva. At that assembly, Australia sponsored a resolution to ban the sale and use of tobacco products in buildings owned, operated, or controlled by the UN system.

During the debate no country spoke against the resolution, although some tobacco producers asked that the World Health Organisation re-double its efforts to work with the Food and Agricultural Organisation on crop substitution.

Countries which included themselves as co-sponsors included: Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Benin, Bhutan, Botswana, Canada, China, Cook Islands, Côte d'Ivoire, Finland, France, Ghana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Jamaica, Jordan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Micronesia (Federated States of), Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga, United Kingdom, United States, and Vanuatu. An additional 15 countries added their names to the list of co-sponsors during the debate.

Implementation of this ban is set for May 1995, and I urge readers of *Tobacco Control* to assist in the monitoring process.

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Tobacco-free schools in a tobacco-growing state

To the Editor – Fayette County is the third largest burley-producing county in Kentucky, the US state which leads the nation in smoking prevalence and where burley tobacco is the leading legal cash crop. Tobacco enjoys considerable economic clout in Kentucky, and designated smoking areas for students are the norm in Kentucky high schools. Despite this, we implemented a smoking policy in Fayette County Public Schools in 1992. Our purpose in writing this letter is to outline the steps we found to be effective in implementing a tobacco-free schools policy in a tobacco state.

The Substance Abuse Resource Teacher (LM) first developed a Smoke-Free Schools

Committee. Committee membership consisted of five teachers, three principals, two administrators, two non-teaching staff, four students, three parents, and three community members, and represented groups within the school system and the community at large.

Based on scientific evidence, the Committee easily reached consensus that smoking harms the smoker and that the health risks extend to the use of all tobacco products. Because of the research concerning environmental tobacco smoke (ETS), we realised that going tobacco-free could be easily justified for legal purposes. Because of the importance of role modeling as an educational tool, and concern about the effects of ETS, we decided that the schools should be completely tobacco-free.

The Committee recommended to the Superintendent that "...the use of all tobacco products be prohibited by employees, students, and visitors on all property of the Fayette County Public Schools, and at all events sponsored by Fayette County Public Schools".

We undertook implementation steps as soon as our policy had been formulated. These included awareness campaigns for students, staff, and the community, and strategies for smoking cessation.

We then approached the Fayette County School Board. Media coverage of the Board meetings at which the Tobacco-Free Schools policy was discussed was extensive. To prepare for these meetings, we solicited testimony from experts in health education, medicine, and drug abuse, as well as parents and representatives of community agencies. We also encouraged parents, teachers, staff members, and students to write letters and make phone calls to Board members stressing their support.

After vigorous discussion and three meetings, the School Board voted 3 to 2 in favour of implementation of the plan. We planned an implementation date of 1 July 1992, so that the beginning of the school year would begin the tobacco-free policy. Implementation was fairly uneventful. Smoking cessation programmes provided were not utilized by students.

The essential components were careful planning and the following items: soliciting broad-based school, community, and health agency support; laying the political ground work with invitations of knowledgeable speakers; offering smoking cessation programmes for nicotine addicts; and approaching the issue as one of health, rather than one of behaviour. It was also critical that the policy eliminate tobacco use by faculty and staff as well as by students. This garnered support for the policy by students, reduced difficulty with enforcement, and sent a strong pro-health message to the students. Getting tobacco out of our schools is important; if it can be done in Fayette County, Kentucky, it can probably be done anywhere.

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Smoke-free restaurants

To the Editor – The Australian Council on Smoking and Health is pleased to announce the launch of a national symbol for smoke-free restaurants (pictured).



We believe the combination of a knife/fork/plate symbol with the international non-smoking symbol gives a clear positive message of food without smoke.

Adoption of the logo followed consultations with major health organisations around Australia about the design, which was developed by the Council in conjunction with the Health Department of Western Australia.

Research has shown that demand for smoke-free dining is strong in all states and the adoption of this national logo will lead to recognition of the symbol Australia-wide. We hope that this symbol will become as much a part of our culture as the BYO (Bring Your Own) sign, indicating that patrons can bring their own wines to a restaurant and avoid paying the heavy mark-ups that are common. The response to the symbol since its release has been very positive. We are keen now to seek comments from people in other countries who may have similar designs to indicate smoke-free restaurants, or may be interested in adopting this one. Comments should be sent to ACOSH, PO Box 327, Subiaco WA 6008, Australia.

See p. 242. – ED

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High participation rates in cigarette brand promotions

To the Editor – An elaborate catalogue redemption programme featuring gifts in exchange for packs has accompanied the recent launch of Marlboro Adventure Tours in the United States (US).^{1,2} Interested customers are encouraged to save specially marked Universal Product Code barcodes from the sides of packages to accumulate "Marlboro Adventure Miles". Each specially marked barcode is worth five miles. Clothing, sporting gear, lighters, radios, can openers, etc, can be obtained through the programme. Philip Morris imported the programme from Germany, where it had run since 1984, to compete with the catalogue redemption programme offered by Camel (via Camel Cash coupons attached to packs of filtered Camels).

While neither Philip Morris nor RJ Reynolds readily shares data on the extent to which the barcodes are redeemed, an indirect measure suggests these are popular programmes. Empty cigarette packs were picked